

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

Applicant amends claims 1, 7, 8, 14-17, 22, 27, 32, and 37 as indicated in the following listing of claims, which replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for communicating between a first private network and a second private network configured from nodes in a public network, comprising:

receiving a non-tunneled packet from a source node in the first private network;

determining whether the packet is destined for the second private network;

obtaining an address mapping corresponding to a destination node in the second private network and acquiring a channel key associated with a channel based on the determination,

wherein the channel comprises a plurality of non-tunneled virtual links through the public network that connects a plurality of channel nodes, the channel nodes including the source node and the destination node, ~~such that~~

wherein only the channel nodes are permitted to communicate over the channel, [[and]]

wherein the channel key is updated ~~for a modification of the channel nodes~~ upon an addition of a new channel node to the channel, and

wherein the channel key is updated upon a departure of one  
of the channel nodes from the channel; and

forwarding the packet over the channel to the destination node.

2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, said forwarding comprising:  
  
    sending the packet to the destination node using the address mapping,  
    the address mapping reflecting a relationship between an internal  
    address for the destination node for use in communicating among  
    nodes in the second private network and an external address for  
    the destination node suitable for communicating over the public  
    network.
3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2, said sending further comprising,  
  
    adding the external address to the packet.
4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2, said sending further comprising,  
  
    encrypting the packet.
5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2, said obtaining comprising,  
  
    accessing the address mapping based on a determination that the packet  
    is destined for the second private network.

6. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, said determining comprising,  
  
determining whether an address mapping exists for a destination address  
in the packet.
7. (Currently Amended) A method for communicating between a first private  
network and a second private network configured from nodes in a public network,  
comprising:
- receiving a non-tunneled packet from a source node in the first private  
network;
- determining whether the packet is destined for the second private network;
- obtaining an address mapping corresponding to a destination node in the  
second private network and acquiring a channel key associated  
with a channel based on the determination,
- wherein the channel comprises a plurality of non-tunneled  
virtual links through the public network that connects  
a plurality of channel nodes, the channel nodes  
including the source node and the destination node,  
~~such that~~
- wherein only the channel nodes are permitted to  
communicate over the channel, [[and]]
- wherein the channel key is updated ~~for a modification of the~~  
~~channel nodes~~ upon an addition of a new channel  
node to the channel, and

wherein the channel key is updated upon a departure of one  
of the channel nodes from the channel; and

sending the packet over the channel to the destination node using the address mapping, the address mapping reflecting a relationship between an internal address for the destination node for use in communicating among nodes in the second private network and an external address for the destination node suitable for communicating over the public network.

8. (Currently Amended) A method for communicating between a first private network and a second private network that uses a public network infrastructure, comprising:

receiving a non-tunneled packet from a source node in the second private network;

determining whether the packet is destined for the second private network;

obtaining an address mapping corresponding to a router node in the first private network and acquiring a channel key associated with a channel based on the determination,

wherein the channel comprises a plurality of non-tunneled virtual links through the public network that connects a plurality of channel nodes, the channel nodes including the source node and the router node, ~~such that~~

wherein only the channel nodes are permitted to communicate over the channel, [[and]]

wherein the channel key is updated ~~for a modification of the~~  
channel nodes upon an addition of a new channel  
node to the channel, and

wherein the channel key is updated upon a departure of one  
of the channel nodes from the channel; and

forwarding the packet over the channel to a destination node in the first  
private network.

9. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 8, said forwarding comprising:  
  
sending the packet to the router node using the address mapping, wherein  
the router node forwards the packet to the destination node based  
on an internal address in the packet for the destination node  
suitable for communicating among nodes in the first private  
network.
10. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 9, said sending further comprising,  
  
adding, to the packet, an external address for the router node suitable for  
communicating over the public infrastructure.
11. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 9, said sending further comprising,  
  
encrypting the packet.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 9, said obtaining comprising,
- accessing the address mapping based on a determination that the packet  
is not destined for the second private network.
13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 8, said determining comprising,
- determining whether an address mapping exists for a destination address  
in the packet.
14. (Currently Amended) A method for communicating between a first private  
network and a second private network that uses a public network infrastructure,  
comprising:
- receiving a non-tunneled packet from a source node in the second private  
network;
- determining whether the packet is destined for the second private network;
- obtaining an address mapping corresponding to a router node and  
acquiring a channel key associated with a channel based on the  
determination,
- wherein the channel comprises a plurality of non-tunneled  
virtual links through the public network that connects  
a plurality of channel nodes, the channel nodes  
including the source node and the router node, ~~such~~  
~~that~~
- wherein only the channel nodes are permitted to  
communicate over the channel, [[and]]

wherein the channel key is updated ~~for a modification of the~~  
channel nodes upon an addition of a new channel  
node to the channel, and

wherein the channel key is updated upon a departure of one  
of the channel nodes from the channel; and

sending the packet over the channel to the router node using the address mapping, wherein the router node forwards the packet to a destination node in the first private network based on an internal address in the packet for the destination node suitable for communicating among nodes in the first private network.

15. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for communicating between a first private network and a second private network that uses a public network infrastructure, comprising:

a memory having program instructions; and

a processor responsive to the program instructions to:

receive a non-tunneled packet from a source node in the first private network,

determine whether the packet is destined for the second private network,

acquire a channel key associated with a channel based on the determination,

wherein the channel comprises a plurality of non-tunneled virtual links through the public

network that connects a plurality of channel nodes, the channel nodes including the source node and a destination node in the second private network, ~~such that~~

wherein only the channel nodes are permitted to communicate over the channel, ~~[[and]]~~

wherein the channel key is updated ~~for a modification of the channel nodes,~~ upon an addition of a new channel node to the channel, and

wherein the channel key is updated upon a departure of one of the channel nodes from the channel;  
and

forward the packet over the channel to the destination node.

16. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for communicating between a first private network and a second private network that uses a public network infrastructure, comprising:

a memory having program instructions; and

a processor responsive to the program instructions to:

receive a non-tunneled packet from a source node in the second private network,

determine whether the packet is destined for the second private network, and



acquire a channel key associated with a channel based on the determination,

wherein the channel comprises a plurality of non-tunneled virtual links through the public network that connects a plurality of channel nodes, the channel nodes including the source node and a destination node in the first private network, ~~such that~~

wherein only the channel nodes are permitted to communicate over the channel, [[and]]

wherein the channel key is updated ~~for a modification of the channel nodes~~ upon an addition of a new channel node to the channel, and

wherein the channel key is updated upon a departure of one of the channel nodes from the channel;  
and

forward the packet over the channel to the destination node.

17. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium containing instructions for performing a method for communicating between a first private network and a second private network that uses a public network infrastructure, the method comprising:

receiving a non-tunneled packet from a source node in the first private network;

determining whether the packet is destined for the second private network;

obtaining an address mapping corresponding to a destination node in the second private network and acquiring a channel key associated with a channel based on the determination,

wherein the channel comprises a plurality of non-tunneled virtual links through the public network that connects a plurality of channel nodes, the channel nodes including the source node and the destination node, ~~such that~~

wherein only the channel nodes are permitted to communicate over the channel, [[and]]

wherein the channel key is updated ~~for a modification of the channel nodes~~ upon an addition of a new channel node to the channel, and

wherein the channel key is updated upon a departure of one of the channel nodes from the channel; and

sending the packet over the channel to the destination node using the address mapping, the address mapping reflecting a relationship between an internal address for the destination node for use in communicating among nodes in the second private network and an external address for the destination node suitable for communicating over the public infrastructure.

18. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 17, said sending further comprising,

adding the external address to the packet.

19. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 17, said sending further comprising,  
  
    encrypting the packet.
20. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 17, said obtaining comprising,  
  
    accessing the address mapping based on a determination that the packet  
        is destined for the second private network.
21. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 17, said determining comprising,  
  
    determining whether an address mapping exists for a destination address  
        in the packet.
22. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium containing instructions for performing a method for communicating between a first private network and a second private network that uses a public network infrastructure, the method comprising:  
  
    receiving a non-tunneled packet from a source node in the second private network;  
  
    determining whether the packet is destined for the second private network;  
  
    obtaining an address mapping corresponding to a router node and  
        acquiring a channel key associated with a channel based on the determination,

wherein the channel comprises a plurality of non-tunneled virtual links through the public network that connects a plurality of channel nodes, the channel nodes including the source node and the router node, ~~such that~~

wherein only the channel nodes are permitted to communicate over the channel, [[and]]

wherein the channel key is updated ~~for a modification of the channel nodes~~ upon an addition of a new channel node to the channel, and

wherein the channel key is updated upon a departure of one of the channel nodes from the channel; and

sending the packet over the channel to the router node using the address mapping, wherein the router node forwards the packet to a destination node in the first private network based on an internal address in the packet for the destination node suitable for communicating among nodes in the first private network.

23. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 22, said sending further comprising,

adding, to the packet, an external address for the router node suitable for communicating over the public infrastructure.

24. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 22, said sending further comprising,
- encrypting the packet.
25. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 22, said obtaining comprising,
- accessing the address mapping based on a determination that the packet is not destined for the second private network.
26. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 22, said determining comprising,
- determining whether an address mapping exists for a destination address in the packet.
27. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for communicating between a first private network and a second private network configured from nodes in a public network infrastructure, comprising:
- means for receiving a non-tunneled packet from a source node in the first private network;
- means for determining whether the packet is destined for the second private network;
- means for obtaining an address mapping corresponding to a destination node in the second private network and acquiring a channel key associated with a channel based on the determination; and

means for sending the packet over the channel to the destination node using the address mapping, the address mapping reflecting a relationship between an internal address for the destination node for use in communicating among nodes in the second private network and an external address for the destination node suitable for communicating over the public infrastructure.

28. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 27, said means for sending further comprising,

means for adding the external address to the packet.

29. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 27, said means for sending further comprising,

means for encrypting the packet.

30. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 27, said means for obtaining comprising,

means for accessing the address mapping based on a determination that the packet is destined for the second private network.

31. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 27, said means for determining comprising,

means for determining whether an address mapping exists for a destination address in the packet.

32. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for communicating between a first private network and a second private network configured from nodes in a public network infrastructure, comprising:

means for receiving a non-tunneled packet from a source node in the second private network;

means for determining whether the packet is destined for the second private network;

means for obtaining an address mapping corresponding to a router node and acquiring a channel key associated with a channel based on the determination;

means for sending the packet over the channel to the router node using the address mapping, wherein the router node forwards the packet to a destination node in the first private network based on an internal address in the packet for the destination node suitable for communicating among nodes in the first private network.

33. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 32, said means for sending further comprising,

means for adding, to the packet, an external address for the router node suitable for communicating over the public infrastructure.

34. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 32, said means for sending further comprising,

means for encrypting the packet.

35. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 32, said means for obtaining comprising,
- means for accessing the address mapping based on a determination that the packet is not destined for the second private network.
36. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 32, said means for determining comprising,
- means for determining whether an address mapping exists for a destination address in the packet.
37. (Currently Amended) A method for communicating between a first private network and a second private network configured from nodes in a public network, comprising:
- receiving, at a router node, a first non-tunneled packet from a source node in the first private network, wherein the router node facilitates connection between the first private network and the second private network;
- determining whether the first packet is destined for the second private network;
- obtaining an address mapping corresponding to a second destination node in the second private network and acquiring a channel key associated with a channel based on the determination,
- wherein the channel comprises a plurality of non-tunneled virtual links through the public network that connects



a plurality of channel nodes, the channel nodes including the source node and the router node, ~~such that~~

wherein only the channel nodes are permitted to communicate over the channel, ~~[[and]]~~

wherein the channel key is updated ~~for a modification of the channel nodes~~ upon an addition of a new channel node to the channel, and

wherein the channel key is updated upon a departure of one of the channel nodes from the channel;

sending the first packet over the channel to the second destination node using the address mapping, the address mapping reflecting a relationship between an internal address for the second destination node for use in communicating among nodes in the second private network and an external address for the second destination node suitable for communicating over the public infrastructure;

receiving a second non-tunneled packet from a source node in the second private network;

determining whether the second packet is destined for the second private network;

obtaining an address mapping corresponding to the router node based on the determination that the second packet is not destined for the second private network; and

sending the packet over the channel to the router node using the address mapping corresponding to the router node, wherein the router node forwards the packet to a first destination node in the first private

network based on an internal address in the second packet for the first destination node suitable for communicating among nodes in the first private network.